THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The problem of pollution in Raniganj and Jharia Coalfields concerns the reclamation of abandoned coalmines and the subsidence of land because of forpoper mining method. The level of suspended particulates in ambient air were excessive because no pollution control techniques during mining were adopted. The dust problem is aggravated by the movement of heavy traffic and the absence of green belt in and around the collieries.

(c) The collieries have started taking the following steps for pollution control:—

1. Provision of dust suppression arrangements at coal handling plants, coal washeries and coal loading points.

2. Spraying of water on mine haul roads for suppressing dust raised during transportation of coal and over-burden and reducing and preventing spillage of coal and over-burden roads.

3. Minimising dust by providing buffer zones and green belts in and around the colliery areas and raising of plantation on over-burden dumps.

4. Switching over to the mechanised soft coke making in place of open "Bhatta" system.

Impact of Opencast Mining on Environment

1001. SHRI RAMNARAYAN GOSWAMI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that open cast mining causes serious damages to the land surface as well as environment in the surrounding areas; and

(b) if so, what steps Government have taken for prevention of environmental damage and restoration of the damaged areas?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R ANSARI): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government is aware of the damage caused to the land surface and the environment in the surrounding areas due to opencast mining activities.

(b) The Government has adopted a two pronged approach outlined below for checking environmental damage in future and for restoration of damaged areas:

(i) The new mining projects are critically examined to ensure incorporation of adequate environmental safeguards, such as concurrent reclamation of the mined areas, at the planning stage itself.

(ii) For restoration of damaged areas the Government has set up an Expert Committee which would study the status of these areas and suggest a suitable approach for restoration.

West Bengal Chief Minister's request for giving Presidential Assent to West Bengal Land Reforms (3rd Amendment) Bill, 1986

1002. SHRI MOHAMMED AMIN: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Chief Minister of West Bengal has drawn the attention of the Prime Minister in the matter of Presidential assent to the West Bengal Land Reforms (3rd Amendment) Bill, 1986; and

(b) what is the present position in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.